

# Lenin

## Two Tactics of Social-Democracy

in the

## Democratic Revolution

1905



The Russian Revolution of 1905

# Lenin, Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, 1905

---

Written: June - July 1905

First Published: July 1905 (as pamphlet in Geneva) by the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.

Online Version: Lenin Internet Archive (marxists.org) 1999

Transcription: David Walters and Vigor Kronick

HTML Markup: Brian Basgen

---

## Contents (*Chapters in bold are included in this selection*):

LIA Introduction

### **Preface (below)**

01. An Urgent Political Question

02. What Does the Resolution of the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. on a Provisional Revolutionary Government Teach Us?

03. What Is Meant by a "the Revolution's Decisive Victory of Over Tsarism"?

04. The Abolition of the Monarchy. The Republic

**05. How Should "the Revolution Be Advanced"? (page 5)**

06. Whence is the Proletariat Threatened With the Danger of Finding Itself with its Hands Tied in the Struggle Against the Inconsistent Bourgeoisie?

07. The Tactics of "Eliminating the Conservatives From the Government"

08. The *Osvobozhdeniye* and New *Iskra* Trends.

09. What is Meant by Being a Party of Extreme of Position in Time of Revolution Mean?

**10. "Revolutionary Communes" and the Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry (page 8)**

11. A Cursory Comparison Between Several of the Resolutions of the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. and Those of the "Conference"

12. Will the Sweep of the Democratic Revolution Be Diminished If the Bourgeoisie Recoils From It?

**13. Conclusion. Dare We Win? (page 16)**

Epilogue. Once Again *Osvobozhdeniye*, Once Again New *Iskra* Trend.

---

## Preface

In a revolutionary period it is very difficult to keep abreast of events, which provide an astonishing amount of new material for an evaluation of the tactical slogans of revolutionary parties. The present pamphlet was written before the Odessa events.<sup>1</sup> We have already pointed out in the Proletary (No. 9 — "Revolution Teaches") that these events have forced even those Social-Democrats who created the "uprising-as-a-process" theory and who rejected propaganda for a provisional revolutionary

government actually to pass over, or begin to pass over, to the side of their opponents. Revolution undoubtedly teaches with a rapidity and thoroughness which appear incredible in peaceful periods of political development. And, what is particularly important, it teaches not only the leaders, but the masses as well.

There is not the slightest doubt that the revolution will teach social-democratism to the masses of the workers in Russia. The revolution will confirm the program and tactics of Social-Democracy in actual practice, by demonstrating the true nature of the various classes of society, by demonstrating the bourgeois character of our democracy and the real aspirations of the peasantry, who, while being revolutionary in the bourgeois-democratic sense, harbour not the idea of "socialisation," but of a new class struggle between the peasant bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. The old illusions of the old Narodism, which are so clearly visible, for instance, in the draft programme of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party on the question of the development of capitalism in Russia, the question of the democratic character of our "society" and the question of the significance of a complete victory of a peasant uprising—all these illusions will be mercilessly and completely blown to the winds by the revolution. For the first time it will give the various classes their real political baptism. These classes will emerge from the revolution with a definite political physiognomy, for they will have revealed themselves, not only in the programs and tactical slogans of their ideologists, but also in the open political action of the masses.

Undoubtedly, the revolution will teach us, and will teach the masses of the people. But the question that now confronts a militant political party is: Shall we be able to teach the revolution anything? Shall we be able to make use of the correctness of our Social-Democratic doctrine, of our bond with the only thoroughly revolutionary class, the proletariat, to put a proletarian imprint on the revolution, to carry the revolution to a real and decisive victory, not in word but in deed, and to paralyse the instability, half-heartedness and treachery of the democratic bourgeoisie?

It is to this end that we must direct all our efforts, and the achievement of it will depend, on the one hand, on the accuracy of our appraisal of the political situation, on the correctness of our tactical slogans, and, on the other hand, on whether these slogans will be backed by the real fighting strength of the masses of the workers. All the usual, regular, current work of all the organisations and groups of our Party, the work of propaganda, agitation and organisation, is directed towards strengthening and expanding the ties with the masses. This work is always necessary; but in a revolutionary period less than in any other can it be considered sufficient. At such a time the working class feels an instinctive urge for open revolutionary action, and we must learn to set the aims of this action correctly, and then make these aims as widely known and understood as possible. It must not be forgotten that the current pessimism about our ties with the masses very often serves as a screen for

bourgeois ideas regarding the role of the proletariat in the revolution. Undoubtedly, we still have a great deal to do to educate and organise the working class; but the whole question now is: Where should the main political emphasis in this work of education and of organisation be placed? On the trade unions and legally existing societies, or on armed insurrection, on the work of creating a revolutionary army and a revolutionary government? Both serve to educate and organise the working class. Both are, of course, necessary. But the whole question now, in the present revolution, amounts to this: what is to be emphasised in the work of educating and organising the working class, the former or the latter?

The outcome of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, a subsidiary that is powerful in the force of its onslaught against the autocracy but impotent politically, or whether it will play the part of leader of the people's revolution. The more intelligent representatives of the bourgeoisie are perfectly aware of this. That is precisely why the *Osvobozhdeniye* praises Akimovism, Economism in Social-Democracy, the trend, which is *now* placing the trade unions and the legally existing societies in the forefront. That is precisely why Mr. Struve welcomes (in the *Osvobozhdeniye*, No. 72) the Akimovist trends in the principles of the new *Iskra*. That is why he comes down so heavily on the detested revolutionary narrowness of the decisions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

It is exceptionally important at the present time for Social-Democracy to have correct tactical slogans for leading the masses. There is nothing more dangerous in a revolutionary period than belittling the importance of tactical slogans that are sound in principle. For example, the [Menshevik] *Iskra* in No. 104, actually passes over to the side of its opponents in the Social-Democratic movement, and yet, at the same time, disparages the importance of slogans and tactical decisions that are in front of the times and indicate the path along which the movement is proceeding, with a number of failures, errors, etc. On the contrary, the working out of correct tactical decisions is of immense importance for a party which, in the spirit of the sound principles of Marxism, desires to lead the proletariat and not merely to drag at the tail of events. In the resolutions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and of the Conference of the section which has seceded from the Party<sup>2</sup>, we have the most precise, most carefully thought-out, and most complete expression of tactical views—views not casually expressed by individual writers, but accepted by the responsible representatives of the Social-Democratic proletariat. Our Party is in advance of all the others, for it has a precise program, accepted by all. It must also set the other parties an example of strict adherence to its tactical resolutions, in contradistinction to the opportunism of the democratic bourgeoisie of the *Osvobozhdeniye* and the revolutionary phrase-mongering of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who only during the revolution suddenly

thought of coming forward with a "draft" of a program and of investigating for the first time whether it is a bourgeois revolution that is going on in front of their eyes.

That is why we think it a most urgent task of the revolutionary Social-Democrats to study carefully the tactical resolutions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and of the Conference, to define what deviations there are in them from the principles of Marxism, and to get a clear understanding of the concrete tasks of the Social-Democratic proletariat in a democratic revolution. It is to this task that the present pamphlet is devoted. The testing of our tactics from the standpoint of the principles of Marxism and of the lessons of the revolution is also necessary for those who really desire to pave the way for unity of tactics as a basis for the future complete unity of the whole Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and not to confine themselves solely to verbal admonitions.

**N. Lenin, July 1905**

---

### **Footnotes**

1) The reference is to the mutiny on the armoured cruiser Potemkin. [Author's note to the 1907 edition.]

2) The Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (held in London in May 1905) was attended only by Bolsheviks, while in the "Conference" (held in Geneva at the same time) only Mensheviks participated. In the present pamphlet the latter are frequently referred to as "new *Iskra*-ists" because while continuing to publish the *Iskra* they declared, through their then adherent, Trotsky, that there was a gulf between the old and the new *Iskra*. [Author's note to the 1907 edition.]

---

## **Chapter 5: How Should "The Revolution Be Pushed Forward"?**

Let us quote the next section of the resolution:

"Under such conditions, Social-Democracy must strive to maintain during the whole course of the revolution, a position which will best of all secure for it the possibility of pushing the revolution forward, which will not tie the hands of Social-Democracy in its struggle against the inconsistent and self-seeking policy of the bourgeois parties and which will preserve it from being merged in bourgeois democracy.

"Therefore, Social-Democracy must not set itself the aim of seizing or sharing power in the provisional government, but must remain the party of extreme revolutionary opposition."

The advice to occupy a position which best ensures the possibility of advancing the revolution pleases us very much indeed. We would only desire that this piece of

good advice should be accompanied by a direct indication as to how Social-Democracy should further advance the revolution right now, in the present political situation, in a period of rumours, conjectures, and talk and schemes about the convocation of the people's representatives. Can the revolution now be further advanced by those who fail to understand the danger of the *Osvobozhdeniye* theory of "compromise" between the people and the tsar, by those who call a mere 'decision' to convene a constituent assembly a victory, who do not set themselves the task of carrying on active propaganda of the idea of the need for a provisional revolutionary government, or who leave the slogan of a democratic republic in the background? Such people actually *pull the revolution back*, because, as far as *practical politics* are concerned, they have stopped at the level of the *Osvobozhdeniye* stand. What is the use of their recognising a programme which demands that the autocracy be replaced by a republic, if in a resolution on tactics that defines the Party's present and immediate tasks in the period of revolution they omit the slogan of a struggle for a republic? It is the *Osvobozhdeniye* position, the position of the constitutionalist bourgeoisie, that is now actually characterised by the fact that a decision to convene a popular constituent assembly is considered a decisive victory, while a prudent silence is maintained on the subject of a provisional revolutionary government and a republic! To *advance* the revolution, to take it beyond the limits to which the monarchist bourgeoisie advances it, it is necessary actively to produce, emphasise, and bring into the forefront slogans that will *preclude* the "inconsistency" of bourgeois democracy. At present there are *only two* such slogans: 1) a provisional revolutionary government, and 2) a republic, because the slogan of a popular constituent assembly *has been accepted* by the monarchist bourgeoisie (see the programme of the *Osvobozhdeniye* League) and accepted for the very purpose of devitalising the revolution, preventing its complete victory, and enabling the big bourgeoisie to strike a huckster's bargain with tsarism. And now we see that of the two slogans, which alone are capable of advancing the revolution, the Conference completely forgot the slogan of a republic, and plainly put the slogan of a provisional revolutionary government on a par with the *Osvobozhdeniye* slogan of a popular constituent assembly, calling both the one and the other "a decisive victory of the revolution"!!

Indeed, such is the undoubted fact, which, we are sure, will serve as a landmark for the future historian of Russian Social-Democracy. The Conference of Social-Democrats held in May 1905 passed a resolution which contains fine words about the necessity of advancing the democratic revolution, but in fact pulls it back and goes no farther than the democratic slogans of the monarchist bourgeoisie.

The new-*Iskra* group likes to accuse us of ignoring the danger of the proletariat becoming dissolved in bourgeois democracy. We should like to see the person who would undertake to prove this charge on the basis of the text of the resolutions

passed by the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. Our reply to our opponents is—a Social-Democratic Party which operates in a bourgeois society cannot take part in politics without marching, in certain cases, *side by side* with bourgeois democracy. The difference between us in this respect is that we march side by side with the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie, without merging with it, whereas you march side by side with the *liberal and the monarchist bourgeoisie*, without merging with it either. *That is how matters stand.*

The tactical slogans you have formulated in the name of the Conference coincide with the slogans of the "ConstitutionalDemocratic" Party, i.e., *the party of the monarchist bourgeoisie*; moreover, you have not even noticed or realised this coincidence, thus actually following in the *wake* of the *Osvobozhdeniye fraternity*.

The tactical slogans we have formulated in the name of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party coincide with the slogans of the democratic-revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie. In Russia this bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie have not yet formed themselves into a big people's party.<sup>1</sup> But only one who is utterly ignorant of what is now taking place in Russia can doubt that elements of such a party exist. We intend to guide (if the great Russian revolution makes progress) not only the proletariat, organised by the Social-Democratic Party, but also this petty bourgeoisie, which is capable of marching side by side with us.

Through its resolution the Conference unconsciously *descends* to the level of the liberal and monarchist bourgeoisie. The Party Congress in its resolution consciously *raises* to its own level those elements of the revolutionary democracy that are capable of waging a struggle and not of acting as brokers.

Such elements are mostly to be found among the peasants. In classifying the big social groups according to their political tendencies we can, without danger of serious error, identify revolutionary and republican democracy with the mass of the peasants—of course, in the same sense and with the same reservations and implied conditions as we can identify the working class with Social-Democracy. In other words, we can also formulate our conclusions in the following terms: in a revolutionary period the Conference in its *national-wide<sup>2</sup> political* slogans unconsciously *descends to the level of the mass of the landlords*. The Party Congress in its national political slogans *raises the peasant masses to the revolutionary level*. We challenge anyone who because of this conclusion may accuse us of evincing a penchant for paradoxes, to refute the proposition that if we are not strong enough to bring the revolution to a successful conclusion, if the revolution terminates in a "decisive victory" in the *Osvobozhdeniye* sense, i.e., exclusively in the form of a representative assembly convened by the tsar, which could be called a constituent

assembly only in derision—then this will be a revolution in which the *landlord and big bourgeois* element will preponderate. On the other hand, if we are destined to live through a really great revolution, if history prevents a "miscarriage" this time, if we are strong enough to carry the revolution to a successful conclusion, to a decisive victory, not in the *Osvobozhdeniye* or the new *Iskra* sense of the word, then it will be a revolution in which the peasant and proletarian element will preponderate.

Some people may, perhaps, interpret our admission that such a preponderance is possible as a renunciation of the view that the impending revolution will be bourgeois in character. This is very likely, considering how this concept is misused in the *Iskra*. For this reason it will not be at all superfluous to dwell on this question.

Next: When is the Proletariat threatened...against the inconsistent Bourgeoisie?

---

### Footnotes

1) The Socialist-Revolutionaries are a terrorist group of intellectuals rather than the embryo of such a party, although the objective significance of this group's activities can be reduced to this very task of achieving the aims of the revolutionary and republican bourgeoisie.

2) We are not referring here to the special peasant slogans which were dealt with in separate resolutions.

---

## Chapter 10: "Revolutionary Communes" and the Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry

The Conference of the new-Iskraists did not keep to the anarchist position into which the new *Iskra* had talked itself (only "from below," not "from below and from above"). The absurdity of admitting the possibility of an insurrection and not admitting the possibility of victory and participation in a provisional revolutionary government was too glaring. The resolution therefore introduced certain reservations and restrictions into the solution of the question proposed by Martynov and Martov. Let us consider these reservations as stated in the following section of the resolution:

"These tactics" ("to remain the party of extreme revolutionary opposition") "do not, of course, in any way exclude the expediency of a partial and episodic seizure of power and the establishment of revolutionary communes in one or another city, in one or another district, exclusively for the purpose of helping to spread the insurrection and of disrupting the government."



That being the case, it means that in principle they admit the possibility of action not only from below, but also from above. It means that the proposition laid down in L. Martov's well-known article in the *Iskra* (No. 93) is discarded and that the tactics of *Vperyod*, i.e., not only "from below," but also "from above," are acknowledged as correct.

Further, the seizure of power (even if partial, episodic, etc.) obviously presupposes the participation not only of Social-Democrats and not only of the proletariat. This follows from the fact that it is not only the proletariat that is interested and takes an active part in a democratic revolution. This follows from the fact that the insurrection is a "popular" one, as is stated in the beginning of the resolution we are discussing, that "non-proletarian groups" (the words used in the Conference resolution on the uprising), i.e., the bourgeoisie, also take part in it. Hence, the principle that any participation of Socialists in a provisional revolutionary government jointly with the petty bourgeoisie is treachery to the working class *was thrown overboard by the Conference*, which is what the *Vperyod* [Lenin's articles "Social-Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government", and "The Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry"] sought to achieve. "Treachery" does not cease to be treachery because the action which constitutes it is partial, episodic, local, etc. Hence, the parallel drawn between the participation in a provisional revolutionary government and vulgar Jaurèsism *was thrown overboard* by the Conference, which is what the *Vperyod* sought to achieve. A government does not cease to be a government because its power does not extend to many cities but is confined to a single city, does not extend to many districts but is confined to a single district; nor because of the name that is given to it. Thus, *the formulation of the principles of this question* which the new *Iskra* tried to give *was discarded by the Conference*.

Let us see whether the restrictions imposed by the Conference on the formation of revolutionary governments and participation in them, which is now admitted in principle, are reasonable. What difference there is between the concept "episodic" and the concept "provisional" [A] we do not know. We are afraid that this "new" and foreign word is merely a screen for lack of clear thinking. It *seems* "more profound," but actually it is only more obscure and confused. What is the difference between the "expediency" of a partial "seizure of power" in a city or district, and participation in a provisional revolutionary government of the entire state? Do not "cities" include a city like St. Petersburg, where the events of January 9 took place? Do not districts include the Caucasus, which is bigger than many a state? Will not the problems (which at one time vexed the new *Iskra*) of what to do with the prisons, the police, public funds, etc., confront us the moment we "seize power" in a single city, let alone in a district? No one will deny, of course, that if we lack sufficient forces, if the insurrection is not wholly successful, or if the victory is

indecisive, it is possible that provisional revolutionary governments will be set up in separate localities, in individual cities and the like. But what is the point of such an assumption, gentlemen? Do not you yourselves speak in the beginning of the resolution about a "decisive victory of the revolution," about a "victorious popular insurrection"? Since when have the Social-Democrats taken over the job of the anarchists: to divide the attention and the aims of the proletariat, to direct its attention to the "partial" instead of the general, the single, the integral and complete? While presupposing the "seizure of power" in a city, you yourselves speak of "spreading the insurrection"—to another city, may we venture to think? To all cities, may we dare to hope? Your conclusions, gentlemen, are as unsound and haphazard, as contradictory and confused as your premises. The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. gave an exhaustive and clear answer to the question of a provisional revolutionary government in general. And this answer covers all cases of local provisional governments as well. The answer given by the Conference however, by artificially and arbitrarily singling out a *part* of the question, merely *evades* (but unsuccessfully) the issue as a whole, and creates confusion.

What does the term "revolutionary communes" mean? Does it differ from the term "provisional revolutionary government," and, if so, in what respect? The Conference gentlemen themselves do not know. Confusion of revolutionary thought leads them, as very often happens, to *revolutionary phrase-mongering*. Yes, the use of the words "revolutionary commune" in a resolution passed by representatives of Social-Democracy is revolutionary phrase-mongering and nothing else. Marx more than once condemned such phrase-mongering, when "fascinating" terms of the *bygone past* were used to hide the tasks of the future. In such cases a fascinating term that has played its part in history becomes futile and pernicious trumpery, a child's rattle. We must give the workers and the whole people a clear and unambiguous explanation as to *why* we want a provisional revolutionary government to be set up, and *exactly what changes* we shall accomplish, if we exercise decisive influence on the government, on the very morrow of the victory of the popular insurrection which has already commenced. These are the questions that confront political leaders.

The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. gave perfectly clear answers to these questions and drew up a complete program of these changes—the minimum program of our Party. The word "commune," however, is not an answer at all; it only serves to confuse people by the distant echo of a sonorous phrase, or empty rhetoric. The more we cherish the memory of the Paris Commune of 1871, for instance, the less permissible is it to refer to it offhand, without analysing its mistakes and the special conditions attending it. To do so would be to follow the absurd example of the Blanquists—whom Engels ridiculed—who (in 1874, in their "Manifesto") paid homage to every act of the Commune.[B] What reply will a "Conference" give to a

worker who asks him about *this* "revolutionary commune" that is mentioned in the resolution? He will only be able to tell him that this is the name, known in history, of a workers' government that was unable to, and could not at that time, distinguish between the elements of a democratic revolution and those of a socialist revolution, that confused the tasks of fighting for a republic with the tasks of fighting for Socialism, that was unable to carry out the task of launching an energetic military offensive against Versailles, that made a mistake in not seizing the Bank of France, etc. In short, whether in your answer you refer to the Paris Commune or to some other commune, your answer will be: it was a government *such as ours should not be*. A fine answer, indeed! Does it not testify to pedantic moralising and impotence on the part of a revolutionary who says nothing about the practical program of the Party and inappropriately begins to give lessons in history in a resolution? Does this not reveal the very mistake which they unsuccessfully accuse us of having committed, i.e., of confusing a democratic revolution with a socialist revolution, between which none of the "communes" was able to distinguish?

Extending the insurrection and the disorganising of the government are presented as the "exclusive" aim of the provisional government. (so inappropriately termed a "commune"). Taken in its literal sense, the word "exclusively" eliminates all other aims; it is an echo of the absurd theory of "only from below." Such elimination of other aims is another instance of short-sightedness and lack of reflection. A "revolutionary commune," i.e., a revolutionary government, even if only in a single city, will inevitably have to administer (even if provisionally, "partly, episodically") *all* the affairs of state, and it is the height of folly to hide one's head under one's wing and refuse to see this. This government will have to enact an eight-hour working day, establish workers' inspection of factories, institute free universal education, introduce the election of judges, set up peasant committees, etc.; in a word, it will certainly have to carry out a number of reforms. To designate these reforms as "helping to spread the insurrection" would be playing with words and deliberately causing greater confusion in a matter which requires absolute clarity.

---

The concluding part of the new *Iskra*-ists' resolution does not provide any new material for a criticism of the trends of principles of "Economism" which has revived in our Party, but it illustrates from a somewhat different angle, what has been said above.

Here is that part:

"Only in one event should Social-Democracy, on its own initiative, direct its efforts towards seizing power and holding it as long as possible—namely, in the event of

the revolution spreading to the advanced countries of Western Europe, where conditions for the achievement of Socialism have already reached a certain "(?)" degree of maturity. In that event the limited historical scope of the Russian revolution can be considerably widened and the possibility of entering the path of socialist reforms will arise.

"By framing its tactics in accordance with the view that, during the whole period of the revolution, the Social-Democratic Party will retain the position of extreme revolutionary opposition to all the governments that may succeed one another in the course of the revolution, Social-Democracy will best be able to prepare itself to utilise governmental power if it falls (??) "into its hands."

The basic idea here is the one that the *Vperyod* has repeatedly formulated, stating that we must not be afraid (as is Martynov) of a complete victory for Social-Democracy in a democratic revolution, i.e., of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, for such a victory will enable us to rouse Europe, and the socialist proletariat of Europe, after throwing off the yoke of the bourgeoisie, will in its turn help us to accomplish the socialist revolution. But see how this idea is worsened in the new *Iskra*-ists' rendering of it. We shall not dwell on details—on the absurd assumption that power could "fall" into the hands of a class-conscious party which considers seizure of power harmful tactics; on the fact that in Europe the conditions for Socialism have reached not a certain degree of maturity, but are already mature; on the fact that our Party program does not speak of socialist changes at all, but only of a socialist revolution. Let us take the principal and basic difference between the idea presented by the *Vperyod* and that presented in the resolution. The *Vperyod* set the revolutionary proletariat of Russia an active aim: to win the battle for democracy and to use this victory for carrying the revolution into Europe. The resolution fails to grasp this connection between our "decisive victory" (not in the new *Iskra* sense) and the revolution in Europe, and therefore it speaks not about the tasks of the proletariat, not about the prospects of *its* victory, but about one of the possibilities in general: "in the event of the revolution spreading. . . ." The *Vperyod* pointedly and definitely indicated—and this was incorporated in the resolution of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—how "governmental power" can and must "be utilised" in the interests of the proletariat, bearing in mind what can be achieved immediately, at the given stage of social development, and what must first be achieved as a democratic prerequisite of the struggle for Socialism. Here, also, the resolution hopelessly drags at the tail when it states: "will be able to prepare itself to utilise," but fails to say *how* it will be able, *how* it will prepare itself, and to utilise *for what*? We have no doubt, for instance, that the new-Iskraists may be "able to prepare themselves to utilise" the leading position in the Party; but the point is that the way

they have utilised, their preparation up till now, do not hold out much hope of possibility being transformed into reality. . . .

The *Vperyod* quite definitely stated wherein lies the real "possibility of holding power"—namely, in the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, in their joint mass strength, which is capable of outweighing all the forces of counterrevolution, in the inevitable concurrence of their interests in *democratic* changes. Here, too, the resolution of the Conference gives us nothing positive, it merely evades the question. Surely, the possibility of holding power in Russia must be determined by the composition of the social forces in Russia itself, by the circumstances of the democratic revolution which is now taking place in our country. A victory of the proletariat in Europe (it is still somewhat of a far cry between carrying the revolution into Europe and the victory of the proletariat) will give rise to a desperate counterrevolutionary struggle on the part of the Russian bourgeoisie—yet the resolution of the new-Iskraists does not say a word about this counterrevolutionary force, the importance of which has been appraised in the resolution of the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. If in our fight for a republic and democracy we could not rely upon the peasantry as well as on the proletariat, the prospect of our "holding power" would be hopeless. But if it is not hopeless, if a "decisive victory of the revolution over tsarism" opens up such a possibility, then we must point to it, we must actively call for its transformation into reality and issue practical slogans not only *for the contingency* of the revolution being carried into Europe, but also *for the purpose* of carrying it there. The reference made by the *khvostist* Social-Democrats to the "limited historical scope of the Russian revolution" merely serves to cover up their limited understanding of the aims of this democratic revolution and of the leading role of the proletariat in this revolution!

One of the objections raised to the slogan of "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" is that dictatorship presupposes a "single will" (*Iskra*, No. 95), and that there can be no single will of the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. This objection is unsound, for it is based on an abstract, "metaphysical" interpretation of the term "single will." There can be a single will in one respect and not a single will in another. The absence of unity on questions of Socialism and in the struggle for Socialism does not preclude singleness of will on questions of democracy and in the struggle for a republic. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the logical and historical difference between a democratic and a socialist revolution. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the character of the democratic revolution as a revolution *of the whole people*: if it is "of the whole people" it means that there is "singleness of will" precisely in so far as this revolution satisfies the common needs and requirements of the whole people. Beyond the bounds of democracy there can be no question of the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie having a single will. Class struggle between them is

inevitable; but it is in a democratic republic that this struggle will be the most thoroughgoing and widespread struggle of the people *for Socialism*. Like everything else in the world, the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privilege. In the struggle against this past, in the struggle against counterrevolution, a "single will" of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for here there is unity of interests.

Its future is the struggle against private property the struggle of the wage worker against the employer the struggle for Socialism. Here singleness of will is impossible.<sup>1</sup> Here our path lies not from autocracy to a republic but from a petty-bourgeois democratic republic to Socialism.

Of course, in actual historical circumstances, the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future, the two paths cross. Wage labour, with its struggle against private property, exists under the autocracy as well; it is generated even under serfdom. But this does not in the least prevent us from drawing a logical and historical dividing line between the major stages of development. We all draw a distinction between bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution, we all absolutely insist on the necessity of drawing a most strict line between them; but can it be denied that individual, particular elements of the two revolutions become interwoven in history? Have there not been a number of socialist movements and attempts at establishing Socialism in the period of democratic revolutions in Europe? And will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to do a very great deal that has been left undone in the field of democracy?

A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage the class struggle for Socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social-Democracy. Hence the temporary nature of our tactics of "striking jointly" with the bourgeoisie and the duty of keeping a strict watch "over our ally, as over an enemy," etc. All this is also beyond the slightest doubt. But it would be ridiculous and reactionary to deduce from this that we must forget, ignore or neglect these tasks which, although transient and temporary, are vital at the present time. The fight against the autocracy is a temporary and transient task of the Socialists, but to ignore or neglect this task in any way would be tantamount to betraying Socialism and rendering a service to reaction. The revolutionary-Democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry is unquestionably only a transient, temporary aim of the Socialists, but to ignore this aim in the period of a democratic revolution would be downright reactionary.

Concrete political aims must be set in concrete circumstances. All things are relative, all things flow and all things change. The program of the German Social-Democratic Party does not contain the demand for a republic. The situation in Germany is such that this question can in practice hardly be separated from the question of Socialism (although even as regards Germany, Engels, in his comments on the draft of the Erfurt Program in 1891, warned against belittling the importance of a republic and of the struggle for a republic!). In the Russian Social-Democratic Party the question of eliminating the demand for a republic from its program and agitation has never even arisen, for in our country there can be no talk of an indissoluble connection between the question of a republic and the question of Socialism. It was quite natural for a German Social-Democrat of 1898 not to put the special question of a republic in the forefront, and this evokes neither surprise nor condemnation. But a German Social-Democrat who in 1848 would have left the question of a republic in the shade would have been a downright traitor to the revolution. There is no such thing as abstract truth. Truth is always concrete.

The time will come when the struggle against the Russian autocracy will end and the period of democratic revolution will be over in Russia; then it will be ridiculous to talk about "singleness of will" of the proletariat and the peasantry, about a democratic dictatorship, etc. When that time comes we shall attend directly to the question of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat and deal with it at greater length. But at present the party of the advanced class cannot but strive most energetically for a decisive victory of the democratic revolution over tsarism. And a decisive victory means nothing else than the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

1) We would remind the reader that in the polemics between the *Iskra* and the *Vperyod*, the former referred among other things to Engels' letter to Turati, in which Engels warned the (future) leader of the Italian reformists not to confuse the democratic with the socialist revolution. The impending revolution in Italy—wrote Engels about the political situation in Italy in 1894—will be a petty-bourgeois, democratic and not a socialist revolution. The *Iskra* reproached the *Vperyod* with having departed from the principle laid down by Engels. This reproach was unjustified, because the *Vperyod* (No. 14)[in "Social-Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government"] fully acknowledged, on the whole, the correctness of Marx's theory of the difference between the three main forces in the revolutions of the nineteenth century. According to this theory, the following forces take a stand against the old order, against the autocracy, feudalism, serfdom:

- 1) the liberal big bourgeoisie,
- 2) the radical petty bourgeoisie,
- 3) the proletariat.

The first fights for nothing more than a constitutional monarchy; the second, for a democratic republic; the third, for a socialist revolution. To confuse the petty-bourgeois struggle for a complete democratic revolution with the proletarian struggle for a socialist revolution spells political bankruptcy for a Socialist. Marx's warning to this effect is quite justified. But it is precisely for this very reason that the slogan "revolutionary communes" is erroneous, because the very mistake committed by the communes that have existed in history is that they confused the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution. On the other hand, our slogan—a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry—fully safeguards us against this mistake. While recognising the uncontestably bourgeois nature of the revolution, which is incapable of *directly* overstepping the bounds a mere democratic revolution, our slogan *pushes forward* this particular revolution and strives to mould it into forms most advantageous to the proletariat; consequently, it strives to make the very most of the democratic revolution in order to attain the greatest success in the further struggle of the proletariat for Socialism.

---

#### Footnote

1) The development of capitalism, more widespread and rapid in conditions of liberty, will inevitably soon put an end to singleness of will; the earlier counter-revolution and reaction are crushed.

---

## Chapter 13: Conclusion. Dare We Win?

People who are superficially acquainted with the state of affairs in Russian Social-Democracy, or who judge as mere onlookers without knowing the whole history of our internal Party struggle since the days of Economism, very often also dismiss the disagreements on tactics which have now become crystallised, especially after the Third Congress, with the simple argument that there are two natural, inevitable and quite reconcilable trends in every Social-Democratic movement. One side, they say, lays special emphasis on the ordinary, current, everyday work, on the necessity of developing propaganda and agitation, of preparing forces, deepening the movement, etc., while the other side lays emphasis on the militant, general political, revolutionary tasks of the movement, points to the necessity of armed insurrection, advances the slogans: for a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship, for a provisional revolutionary government. Neither one side nor the other should exaggerate, they say; extremes are bad, both here and there (and, generally speaking, everywhere in the world), etc., etc.



The cheap truisms of worldly (and "political" in quotation marks) wisdom, which such arguments undoubtedly contain, too often cover up a failure to understand the urgent and acute needs of the Party. Take the differences on tactics that now exist among the Russian Social-Democrats. of course, the special emphasis laid on the everyday, routine aspect of the work, such as we observe in the new *Iskra*-ist arguments about tactics, could not in itself present any danger and could not give rise to any divergence of opinion regarding tactical slogans. But the moment you compare the resolutions of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party with the resolutions of the Conference this divergence becomes strikingly obvious.

What, then, is the trouble? The trouble is that, in the first place, it is not enough to point abstractly to the two currents in the movement and to the harmfulness of extremes. One must know concretely what the given movement is suffering from at the given time, what constitutes the real political danger to the Party at the present time. Secondly, one must know what real political forces are profiting by this or that tactical slogan—or perhaps by the absence of this or that slogan. To listen to the new *Iskra*-ists, one would arrive at the conclusion that the Social-Democratic Party is threatened with the danger of throwing overboard propaganda and agitation, the economic struggle and criticism of bourgeois democracy, of becoming inordinately absorbed in military preparations, armed attacks, the seizure of power, etc. Actually, however, real danger is threatening the Party from an entirely different quarter. Anyone who is at all closely familiar with the state of the movement, anyone who follows it carefully and thoughtfully, cannot fail to see the ridiculous side of the new *Iskra*'s fears. The entire work of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party has already been fully moulded into firm, immutable forms which absolutely guarantee that our main attention will be fixed on propaganda and agitation, impromptu and mass meetings, on the distribution of leaflets and pamphlets, assisting in the economic struggle and championing the slogans of that struggle. There is not a single Party committee, not a single district committee, not a single central delegates' meeting or a single factory group where ninety-nine per cent of all the attention, energy and time are not always and constantly devoted to these functions, which have become firmly established ever since the middle of the 'nineties. Only those who are entirely unfamiliar with the movement are ignorant of this. Only very naïve or ill-informed people can be taken in by the new *Iskra*-ists' repetition of stated truths when it is done with an air of great importance.

The fact is that not only is no excessive zeal displayed among us with regard to the tasks of insurrection, to the general political slogans and to the matter of leading the entire popular revolution, but, on the contrary, it is *backwardness* in this very respect that stands out most strikingly, constitutes our weakest spot and a real danger to the movement, which may degenerate, and in some places is

degenerating, from one that is revolutionary in deeds into one that is revolutionary in words. Among the many, many hundreds of organisations, groups and circles that are conducting the work of the Party you will not find a single one which has not from its very inception conducted the kind of everyday work about which the wiseacres of the new *Iskra* now talk with the air of people who have discovered new truths. On the other hand, you will find only an insignificant percentage of groups and circles that have understood the tasks an armed insurrection entails, which have begun to carry them out, and have realised the necessity of leading the entire popular revolution against tsarism, the necessity of advancing for that purpose certain definite progressive slogans and no other.

We are incredibly behind in our progressive and genuinely revolutionary tasks, in very many instances we have not even become conscious of them; here and there we have failed to notice the strengthening of revolutionary bourgeois democracy owing to our backwardness in this respect. But the writers in the new *Iskra*, turning their backs on the course of events and on the requirements of the times, keep repeating insistently: Don't forget the old! Don't let yourselves be carried away by the new! This is the principal and unvarying leitmotif of all the important resolutions of the Conference; whereas in the Congress resolutions you just as unvaryingly read: while confirming the old (and without stopping to chew it over and over, for the very reason that it is old and has already been settled and recorded in literature, in resolutions and by experience), we put forward a new task, draw attention to it, issue a new slogan, and demand that the genuinely revolutionary Social-Democrats immediately set to work to put it into effect.

That is how matters really stand with regard to the question of the two trends in Social-Democratic tactics. The revolutionary period has called forth new tasks, which only the totally blind can fail to see. And some Social-Democrats unhesitatingly recognise these tasks and place them on the order of the day, declaring: the armed insurrection brooks no delay, prepare yourselves for it immediately and energetically, remember that it is indispensable for a decisive victory, issue the slogans of a republic, of a provisional government, of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Others, however, draw back, mark time, write prefaces instead of giving slogans; instead of pointing to the new while confirming the old, they chew this old tediously and at great length, inventing pretexts to avoid the new, unable to determine the conditions for a decisive victory or to issue the slogans which alone are in line with the striving to attain complete victory.

The political result of this *khvostism* stares us in the face. The fable about a rapprochement between the "majority" of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party and the revolutionary bourgeois democracy remains a fable which has not

been confirmed by a single political fact, by a single important resolution of the "Bolsheviks" or a single act of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. On the other hand, the opportunist, monarchist bourgeoisie, as represented by the *Osvobozhdeniye*, has long been *welcoming* the trends of the "principles" of new *Iskra*-ism and now it is actually running its mill with their grist, is adopting their catchwords and "ideas" directed against "secrecy" and "riots," against exaggerating the "technical" side of the revolution, against openly proclaiming the slogan of armed insurrection, against the "revolutionism" of extreme demands, etc., etc. The resolution of a whole conference of "Menshevik" Social-Democrats in the Caucasus, and the endorsement of that resolution by the editors of the new *Iskra*, sums it all up politically in an unmistakable way: lest the bourgeoisie recoil if the proletariat takes part in a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship! This puts it in a nutshell. This gives the finishing touch to the transformation of the proletariat into an appendage of the monarchist bourgeoisie. The *political meaning* of the *khvostism* of the new *Iskra* is thereby proved in fact, not by a casual declaration of some individual, but by a resolution especially endorsed by a whole trend.

Anyone who ponders over these facts will understand the real significance of the stock reference to the two sides and the two trends in the Social-Democratic movement. For a study of these trends on a large scale, take Bernsteinism. The Bernsteinians have been dinning into our ears in exactly the same way that it is they who understand the true needs of the proletariat, the tasks connected with the growth of its forces, with rendering the entire activity more profound, with preparing the elements of a new society, with propaganda and agitation! Bernstein says: we demand a frank recognition of what is, thus sanctifying a "movement" *without* "final aims", sanctifying defensive tactics only, preaching the tactics of fear "lest the bourgeoisie recoil". The Bernsteinians also raised an outcry against the "Jacobinism" of the revolutionary Social-Democrats, against the "publicists" who fail to understand the "initiative of the workers," etc., etc. In reality, as everyone knows, the revolutionary Social-Democrats have never even thought of abandoning the everyday, petty work, the mustering of forces, etc., etc. All they demanded was a clear understanding of the final aim, a clear presentation of the revolutionary tasks; they wanted to raise the semi-proletarian and semi-petty-bourgeois strata to the revolutionary level of the proletariat, not to reduce this level to that of opportunist considerations such as "lest the bourgeoisie recoil." Perhaps the most vivid expression of this rift between the intellectual opportunist wing and the proletarian revolutionary wing of the Party was the question: *durfen wir siegen?* "Dare we win?" Is it permissible for us to win? Would it not be dangerous for us to win? Ought we to win? This question, which seems so strange at first sight, was raised, however, and had to be raised, because the opportunists were afraid of

victory, were frightening the proletariat away from it, were predicting that trouble would come of it, were ridiculing the slogans that straightforwardly called for it.

The same fundamental division into an intellectual-opportunist and proletarian-revolutionary trend exists also among us, with the very material difference, however, that here we are faced with the question of a democratic revolution, and not of a socialist revolution. The question "dare we win?" which seems so absurd at first sight, has been raised among us also. It was raised by Martynov in his *Two Dictatorships*, in which he prophesied dire misfortune if we prepare well for and carry out an insurrection quite successfully. The question has been raised in all the new *Iskra* literature dealing with a provisional revolutionary government, and all the time persistent though futile efforts have been made to liken Millerand's participation in a bourgeois-opportunist government to Varlin's participation in a petty-bourgeois revolutionary government. It is embodied in a resolution: "lest the bourgeoisie recoil." And although Kautsky, for instance, now tries to wax ironical and says that our dispute about a provisional revolutionary government is like dividing the skin of a bear before the bear has been killed, this irony only proves that even clever and revolutionary Social-Democrats are liable to put their foot in it when they talk about something they know of only by hearsay. German Social-Democracy is not yet so near to killing its bear (carrying out a socialist revolution), but the dispute as to whether we "dare" kill the bear was of enormous importance from the point of view of principles and of practical politics. Russian Social-Democrats are not yet so near to being strong enough to "kill their bear" (to carry out a democratic revolution), but the question as to whether we "dare" kill it is of extreme importance for the whole future of Russia and for the future of Russian Social-Democracy. An army cannot be energetically and successfully mustered and led unless we are sure that we "dare" win.

Take our old Economists. They too howled that their opponents were conspirators, Jacobins (see the *Rabocheye Dyelo*, especially No. 10, and Martynov's speech in the debate on the program at the Second Congress), that by plunging into politics they were divorcing themselves from the masses, that they were losing sight of the fundamentals of the working-class movement, ignoring the initiative of the workers, etc., etc. In reality these supporters of the "initiative of the workers" were opportunist intellectuals who tried to foist on the workers their own narrow and philistine conception of the tasks of the proletariat. In reality the opponents of Economism, as everyone can see from the old *Iskra*, did not neglect or push into the background any of the aspects of Social-Democratic work, nor did they in the least forget the economic struggle; but they were able at the same time to present the urgent and immediate political tasks in their full scope and they opposed the transformation of the workers' party into an "economic" appendage of the liberal bourgeoisie.

The Economists had learned by rote that politics are based on economics and "understood" this to mean that the political struggle should be reduced to the level of the economic struggle. The new-Iskraists have learned by rote that the economic basis of the democratic revolution is the bourgeois revolution, and "understood" this to mean that the democratic aims of the proletariat should be degraded to the level of bourgeois moderation, to the limits beyond which "the bourgeoisie will recoil." On the pretext of rendering their work more profound, on the pretext of rousing the initiative of the workers and pursuing a purely class policy, the Economists were actually delivering the working class into the hands of the liberal-bourgeois politicians, i.e., were leading the Party along a path which objectively meant exactly that. On the same pretexts, the new-Iskraists are actually betraying the interests of the proletariat in the democratic revolution to the bourgeoisie, i.e., are leading the Party along a path which objectively means exactly that. The Economists thought that leadership in the political struggle was no concern of the Social-Democrats but properly the business of the liberals. The new-Iskraists think that the active conduct of the democratic revolution is no concern of the Social-Democrats but properly the business of the democratic bourgeoisie, for, they argue, if the proletariat takes the leading and pre-eminent part it will "diminish the sweep" of the revolution.

In short, the new-Iskraists are the epigones of Economism, not only in their origin at the Second Party Congress, but also in the manner in which they now present the tactical tasks of the proletariat in the democratic revolution. They, too, constitute an intellectual-opportunist wing of the Party. In the sphere of organisation they made their debut with the anarchist individualism of intellectuals and finished with "disorganisation-as-a-process," fixing in the "Rules" [The *"Rules of Organisation"* adopted at the Geneva Menshevik Conference in 1905] adopted by the Conference the separation of the Party's publishing activities from the Party organisation, an indirect and practically four-stage system of elections, a system of Bonapartist plebiscites instead of democratic representation, and finally the principle of "agreements" between the part and the whole. In Party tactics they continued to slide down the same inclined plane. In the "plan of the Zemstvo campaign" they declared that speeches to Zemstvo-ists were "the highest type of demonstration," finding only two active forces on the political scene (on the eve of January 9!)—the government and the democratic bourgeoisie. They made the pressing problem of arming "more profound" by substituting for the direct and practical slogan of an appeal to arm, the slogan: arm the people with a burning desire to arm themselves. The tasks connected with an armed insurrection, with the establishment of a provisional government and with a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship have now been distorted and blunted by them in their official resolutions. "Lest the

bourgeoisie recoil"—this final chord of their last resolution throws a glaring light on the question of where their path is leading the Party.

The democratic revolution in Russia is a bourgeois revolution by reason of its social and economic content. But a mere repetition of this correct Marxian proposition is not enough. It must be properly understood and properly applied in political slogans. In general, all political liberties that are founded on present-day, i.e., capitalist, relations of production are bourgeois liberties. The demand for liberty expresses primarily the interests of the bourgeoisie. Its representatives were the first to raise this demand. Its supporters have everywhere used the liberty they acquired like masters, reducing it to moderate and meticulous bourgeois doses, combining it with the most subtle methods of suppressing the revolutionary proletariat in peaceful times and with brutally cruel methods in stormy times.

But only the rebel Narodniks, the anarchists and the "Economists" could deduce from this that the struggle for liberty should be rejected or disparaged. These intellectual-philistine doctrines could be foisted on the proletariat only for a time and against its will. The proletariat always realised instinctively that it needed political liberty, needed it more than anyone else, despite the fact that its immediate effect would be to strengthen and to organise the bourgeoisie. The proletariat expects to find its salvation not by avoiding the class struggle but by developing it, by widening it, increasing its consciousness, its organisation and determination. Whoever degrades the tasks of the political struggle transforms the Social-Democrat from a tribune of the people into a trade union secretary. Whoever degrades the proletarian tasks in a democratic bourgeois revolution transforms the Social-Democrat from a leader of the people's revolution into a leader of a free labour union.

Yes, the *people's* revolution. Social-Democracy has fought, and is quite rightly fighting against the bourgeois-democratic abuse of the word "people." It demands that this word shall not be used to cover up failure to understand the class antagonisms within the people. It insists categorically on the need for complete class independence for the party of the proletariat. But it divides the "people" into "classes," not in order that the advanced class may become shut up within itself, confine itself to narrow aims and emasculate its activity for fear that the economic rulers of the world will recoil, but in order that the advanced class, which does not suffer from the halfheartedness, vacillation and indecision of the intermediate classes, may with all the greater energy and enthusiasm fight for the cause of the whole of the people, at the head of the whole of the people.

That is what the present-day new-*Iskra*ists so often fail to understand and why they substitute for active political slogans in the democratic revolution a mere pedantic repetition of the word "class," parsed in all genders and cases!

The democratic revolution is a bourgeois revolution. The slogan of a Black Redistribution, or "land and liberty"—this most widespread slogan of the peasant masses, down trodden and ignorant, yet passionately yearning for light and happiness—is a bourgeois slogan. But we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry, than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress. We must not forget that there is not, nor can there be, at the present time, any other means of bringing Socialism nearer, than complete political liberty, than a democratic republic, than the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. As the representatives of the advanced and only revolutionary class, revolutionary without reservations, doubts or looking back, we must present to the whole of the people, as widely, as boldly and with the utmost initiative possible, the tasks of the democratic revolution. To degrade these tasks in theory means making a travesty of Marxism, distorting it in philistine fashion, while in practical politics it means delivering the cause of the revolution into the hands of the bourgeoisie, which will inevitably recoil from the task of consistently carrying out the revolution. The difficulties that lie on the road to the complete victory of the revolution are very great. No one will be able to blame the representatives of the proletariat if, having done everything in their power, their efforts are defeated by the resistance of the reaction, the treachery of the bourgeoisie and the ignorance of the masses. But everybody and the class-conscious proletariat above all, will condemn Social-Democracy if it curtails the revolutionary energy of the democratic revolution and dampens revolutionary ardour because it is afraid to win, because it is actuated by the consideration: lest the bourgeoisie recoil.

Revolutions are the locomotives of history, said Marx. [In *The Class Struggles in France*] Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles, if judged by the narrow, philistine scale of gradual progress. But the leaders of the revolutionary parties must also make their aims more comprehensive and bold at such a time, so that their slogans shall always be in advance of the revolutionary initiative of the masses, serve as a beacon, reveal to them our democratic and socialist ideal in all its magnitude and splendour and show them the shortest and most direct route to complete, absolute and decisive victory. Let us leave to the opportunists of the *Osvobozhdeniye* bourgeoisie the task of inventing roundabout, circuitous paths of compromise out of fear of the revolution and of the direct path. If we are compelled by force to drag

ourselves along such paths, we shall be able to fulfil our duty in petty, everyday work also. But let ruthless struggle first decide the choice of the path. We shall be traitors to and betrayers of the revolution if we do not use this festive energy of the masses and their revolutionary ardour to wage a ruthless and self-sacrificing struggle for the direct and decisive path. Let the bourgeois opportunists contemplate the future reaction with craven fear. The workers will not be frightened either by the thought that the reaction promises to be terrible or by the thought that the bourgeoisie proposes to recoil. The workers are not looking forward to striking bargains, are not asking for sops; they are striving to crush the reactionary forces without mercy, i.e., to set up the *revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*.

Of course, greater dangers threaten the ship of our Party in stormy times than in periods of the smooth "sailing" of liberal progress, which means the painfully slow sweating of the working class by its exploiters. Of course, the tasks of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship are a thousand times more difficult and more complicated than the tasks of an "extreme opposition" or of the exclusively parliamentary struggle. But whoever can deliberately prefer smooth sailing and the path of safe "opposition" in the present revolutionary situation had better abandon Social-Democratic work for a while, had better wait until the revolution is over, until the festive days have passed, when humdrum everyday life starts again and his narrow routine standards no longer strike such an abominably discordant note, or constitute such an ugly distortion of the tasks of the advanced class.

At the head of the whole of the people, and particularly of the peasantry—for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and the exploited—for Socialism! Such must in practice be the policy of the revolutionary proletariat, such is the class slogan which must permeate and determine the solution of every tactical problem, every practical step of the workers' party during the revolution.

---

From: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/tactics/index.htm>

---

**Course: The Classics**

**21081, Lenin, Two Tactics of Social Democracy, 1905, Selection**

10840 words